

## **THE SPEAR OF DESTINY: extract**

‘Stay exactly where you are or I’ll fire!’

They spun round to see a guard levelling a pistol at them – not one of the dozy security guards from their afternoon visit but one dressed in almost military uniform, adopting a stance as if he meant to shoot at any second.

‘What do you mean, you’ll fire?’ roared the Doctor. ‘Don’t be preposterous! This is a museum, not a rifle range!’

He turned to Jo. ‘Come on. I think we should leave.’

‘Do not move!’ bawled the guard. There was the sound of more guards running up the stairs, and the Doctor grabbed Jo’s hand.

‘I’ll shoot!’ shouted the guard.

‘He won’t,’ said the Doctor with great certainty, taking a step back up the stairs.

The wall behind their heads exploded in a mess of plaster that seemed to reach them before they were aware of the gunshot itself.

‘Run!’ cried the Doctor, and they sped back up the stairs, heading for the roof. More gunshots sounded and the wall above their heads erupted as they ran, crouching, for the door to the small stairwell.

The pistol fire was suddenly overwhelmed by the harsh metal sputter of a sub-machine gun. ‘Preposterous!’ cried the Doctor as they took the metal stairs to the roof two at a time. There were more shouts and the sound of boots ringing on the stairs clattered after them.

Shots pinged off the ceiling as they ducked out of the tiny door and back into the cold night air.

‘Into the TARDIS, Jo!’ shouted the Doctor. ‘Quick!’

They burst inside and flung the door shut. The Doctor pounced on the central console and locked them safely inside. The distant sound of gunfire breaking on the outside of the TARDIS came to them, like bees ping-pong off the glass of a thick window.

‘Let’s not outstay our welcome,’ said the Doctor, busily setting co-ordinates.

‘I’d say we already have,’ said Jo. She set the spear beside the door and rushed over to the Doctor.

The sound of gunfire was replaced by the familiar grinding sound of dematerialisation, and Jo felt relief rush over her. She turned round and perched on the edge of the console.

‘Yes, that was rather close,’ said the Doctor. ‘Still, it proves one thing.’

‘Which is?’

‘That the spear is something unusual. No one would go to such lengths to protect it if it was just an old piece of wood and a lump of gold.’

‘Maybe Moxon is just very protective of his collection.’

‘Sub-machine guns? That’s taking museum curation a bit far, don’t you think?’

‘I suppose so,’ said Jo. ‘Anyway, where are we going?’

The Doctor smiled. ‘A very good question.’

‘With a very good answer, I hope.’

‘We can’t steal the spear *now*, but we can steal it in the past. We are therefore travelling back to its only other confirmed location in space–time.’

‘Which is?’

‘Didn’t you read the notice by the case?’

Jo shook her head. ‘Too busy trying to understand Futhark.’

‘Well, do you still have the leaflet from the museum?’

Jo fished in her back pocket and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. She found the short description of the spear.

Ceremonial spear. Found in Gamla Uppsala, Sweden. Believed to have been used in festivals around the vernal equinox, second century AD. Inscription upon the head reads GUNGNIR. In Norse mythology, Gungnir was the magical spear of Odin.

‘You’re taking us to see the Vikings?’ asked Jo incredulously.

‘I know! Wonderful, isn’t it?’ said the Doctor with a grin.